

**TESTIMONY OF BEVERLY BELLODY
FROM THE TOWN OF TOLLAND
ON BEHALF OF FUNDING FOR THE
CONNECTICUT FAIR HOUSING CENTER**

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this evening. My name is Beverly Bellody. I am the Director of the Town of Tolland's Human Services Office and currently serve as the Town's Fair Housing Officer. I am here to thank you for funding the Connecticut Fair Housing Center in the past and to ask you to continue funding them in the future.

Because Tolland receives funding from the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant program through the state of Connecticut, we have an obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. I take this obligation very seriously because I believe the fair housing laws ensure equal access to housing and help erase past patterns of segregation. The Connecticut Fair Housing Center has been instrumental in assisting me in ensuring that Tolland abides by the fair housing laws. As a result of funding from the State of Connecticut, Erin Kemple, the executive director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center, has come to Tolland each year for the last three years to teach a two-hour fair housing class to my staff, the staff of the Tolland Housing Authority, the Tolland Building Department, and the fair housing officers of several surrounding towns. The information we receive is invaluable because it applies directly to the Town's obligations under the fair housing laws and also helps us better serve the residents of our towns.

Recently, my office was assisting an elderly woman find appropriate and affordable housing. One of the places to which she applied told her that to qualify, she needed a co-signer who would agree not only to pay the rent if that was needed but a co-signer who would agree to remove the woman from the housing should the landlord decide that was necessary. If legal,

such a requirement would prevent many people, not just this woman, from getting housing. Because of the fair housing training given by Erin Kemple, I knew that such a requirement violated the fair housing laws. I called the housing provider and informed them that their requirement was illegal and asked if there was anything else preventing my client from being housed. I was told there was not and my client is now living in a safe and affordable home.

The Connecticut Fair Housing Center is an invaluable resource for me and for all of the other cities and towns in Connecticut receiving federal money which must also affirmatively fair housing. There is no one else we can turn to for issues like the one involving my client or for information about how the fair housing laws affect a city or town's ordinances and regulations. Without the Center, Connecticut's cities and towns would not have access to the fair housing guidance which helps us meet our federal obligations thus ensuring that Connecticut continue to receive the more than \$28 million it gets in support for its housing programs from the federal government. Please continue to fund this Connecticut Fair Housing Center so that it can provide this valuable resource to Connecticut's cities and towns.